



Activists Plan to Push for DC Voting Rights at DNC

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Local politicians in Washington have vowed to continue their campaign to win congressional voting rights for residents of the US capital at the upcoming Democratic National Convention (DNC).

US President Barack Obama won the presidency in 2008 with 92.5 percent of the Washington DC's vote as the Democrats won a 16-seat advantage in the Senate, but the DC voting rights cause has experienced another major failure during the past four years, The Washington Post reported Monday.

The disappointment lingers as Democratic leaders arrive in Charlotte to nominate Obama for another four years, the report says, pointing to lost hopes among Washington DC residents and politicians that the first African- American president backed by a Democratic Congress in his first two years in office would finally deliver voting rights for the city, which is populated by majority African-American population.

I think it was a shock to everybody that nothing happened, that with all that going for us, nothing worked out, said Michael D. Brown, one of two nonvoting shadow senators elected to advocate for statehood. There's a new feeling we need to do more to make something happen. •

Many US observers insist that most people, even across the United States, are not aware that residents of the American capital city are denied Congressional voting rights, which means that they cannot have representatives in the US Senate and House of Representatives.

According to the report, the Democratic convention is one of the prominent opportunities for the city to push for its voting rights effort. However, there is a wide belief among local leaders that Democrats have taken the city's support for granted and that they need to be more aggressive in their advocacy.

The city's delegates and political activists have planned several ways to raise awareness of DC issues, says the report.

Some will be making breakfast presentations to state delegations. Others are encouraging delegates to wear red T-shirts sporting pro-District messages. Brown and shadow Rep. Mike Panetta (D) have purchased two billboards promoting statehood now • near the convention site using \$7,500 from a city fund for statehood advocacy. •

DC Vote, the most prominent group advocating for DC voting rights, is holding a Tuesday afternoon rally at Charlotte's Federal Reserve Bank, a block from the arena hosting the prime-time convention program, the report adds.

The venue, said the group's executive director, Ilir Zherka, is meant to highlight efforts to win the city more freedom to set its budget independent of Congress - a smaller step that will be difficult, but is still within the realm of possibility. •

Zherka insists that national Republicans are more openly hostile to District voting rights than at any other time in recent memory, making it crucial that Democrats show the cause strong support. DC Vote, a nonpartisan group, sent representatives to last week's Republican convention but did not rally supporters there.